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## A COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE EARLY EUROPEAN MAY I CELEBRATIONS

The first question to be tackled in connection with this topic is when to begin the discussion of the story. There is no doubt that the first May I celebrations took place in 1890, but it may be a question of debate how far back one should go in introducing its pre-history. We all know the excellent work of Maurice Dommanget in which he wrote the first modern monography supported by ample arguments about the present question. Dommanget, as is well known, traces the topic back to the very old beginnings, and it is also known that he examines a great many theoretical elements while revealing the intellectual and political antecedents — and he is justified to do so. For among them he enlists the following ideas: the eight-hour working day, the replacement of the capitalism order with the socialist formation, the stoppage of work, the general setting of the eight-hour objective just for May I, the international solidarity of the proletariat, the manifestation of solidarity in the law of labor, i.e. the workers try to achieve the changing of their living circumstances by exercising an institutional pressure on the government. All those factors really belong to the intellectual prehistory of the the first May I, just like another important inheritance that the cause of May I is intertwined with: that of peace, of international anti-war solidarity of workers. This power had a decisive importance already when the First International was formed, but later, when the French-Prussian war led to a new increase of chauvinist feelings and new frictions between France and Germany, all that made it imperative again in the 1880s that internationalism and struggle for peace should become one of the elevating powers of the movement of May I.

In a map of the pre-history, a place has to be given to the American example. The events of May I and May 4, 1886, and the execution of the anarchist martyrs in Chicago had an enormous power of mobilization. That in itself would offer the substance for a survey about how the May events of 1886 appeared in the columns of all the significant workers' papers in every country. It may, naturally, be mentioned that among them were not only well known anarchist papers like the London *Freedom* and the Paris *Le Révolté* or the London *The Socialist League*, displaying increasing sympathies to the anarchists, but different social democratic papers as well. And in this respect there was no real difference between the protests and stances of the French and German socialist leaders, publicists and Trade Union leaders. Moreover, this picture must be enlarged both as regards its political spectrum and its time span. On the one hand, the protesters included the members of the British Fabian Society (G. B. Shaw), different intellectual radicals, and the Christian Socialists, an interesting group who had real connections with the workers and who did a lot to keep alive the memory of Chicago in their paper, *The Christian Socialist*. On the other hand, if the arrests and then outrageous trial evoked a wave of protest in the United States and in all Europe, then the announced *Justizmord* verdict gave a new impetus to protest. And following the verdict came the rejection of the pleas for mercy, and then the hangings in November 1887. Chicago and the « bloody birth » of May I did really become unforgettable as a consequence of the international protest of one and a half years when the cause of the workers and the sharp social confrontations became front page news just like the manifestation of humanism and justice as well as the assumption of the universal character of progress.

Dommanget also tells us of the importance of the American example and of the echo evoked in the different European workers' organizations by the fact that the working hours were shortened and the eight-hours introduced earlier in the United States. Another well-known fact is that the same results had been achieved even earlier in Australia and New Zealand, which were also taken as examples by the European socialist press and presented in such a way as to challenge their own governments: they were evidence that their claims had already been accepted elsewhere.

What seems to have lost relevance in the standard work of Dommanget and belongs to the pre-history of May I, was the grave international economic depression and the protracted and unusually high

level of unemployment. These phenomena were surveyed with the tools of statistics, economic analysis and science in an excellent manner by the Belgian Hector Denis not long afterwards [1], However, quite naturally, the workers did not wait for such studies to be performed, thus demonstrations of unemployed took place in London in 1885 and 1886, then the Belgian Jacquerie happened, an excellent and lucid description of which was given by Louis Bertrand and Henri Pirenne. Finally, another step in this process was the Decazeville strike in France, which also gave birth to the independent workers fraction in the French parliament. In fact, it was the economic crisis and the mass movement that shook the half-century long hegemony of liberalism, to use Pirenne's words, the spirit according to which the state only had the role of «night-watchman». Obviously, these changes are inseparable from the origins of May I, its pre-history as well as its essence.

Now let us return to the example of Belgium, the country that was in the greatest political turmoil at the time. For it was here, where the necessity of workers' legislation had been denied most sharply by both the Liberals and the Catholics, that as a result of the Jacquerie things changed. The need for it was acknowledged and experts were appointed, while the government, the King and the leaders of the Liberal party, just like the new Christian Trade Unions formed under the influence of the Jacquerie, began to support the cause of workers' legislation. It was the same forces that manifested themselves in Belgium when the young ex liberal-radical intellectuals, either found their way to the camp of the workers (Vandervelde, Destrée, Volders) or, even if they remained radicals, their road deviated from that of the Liberal Party and they became the advocates of the cause of the workers (Paul Janson).

These phenomena were not limited to Belgium. In England the prolonged economic depression and unemployment led to the «Black Monday» of February 1886 and «Bloody Sunday» of 1887, when not only the policy of the Tories but also the Liberal leaders suffered a sensitive loss of prestige and the separation of the Liberals from the workers' movement speeded up. The lib-lab politicians lost ground, while advanced the «new Trade Unionist» leaders, whose programme included demands about state protection of workers and support for the eight-hour day. Naturally, this tendency went through several phases, actions and fields, but its widening and strengthening preceded, and contributed to, the success of the first May I.

In this process, the «Eight Hours league» also had a role. It was a coalition, which was led at the time of its formation, in 1886, by the new Trade Unionist leaders Tom Mann and John Burns, supported by Engels, Aveling and especially by Eleanor Marx, and also by the Christian Socialists. Tom Mann, in turn, was not only equally in contact with the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society and the Communist League, but had been a member of each of them for a while. The case of the Eight Hours' League is interesting for other reasons as well. It is known that in connection with it Mann and Burns clashed with the doctrinaire, sectarian views of Hyndman, who believed that it was not worth paying much attention to it, for under capitalist conditions it was impossible to achieve essential reforms in the long run, and if it became possible, then even more could be attained, like the overthrow of the system itself. Naturally, this debate touched upon a fundamental question, and, as a result, the debate that had been on the agenda of the first congresses of the First International came to the foreground again: the question of partial reforms, which had been a central problem in those early days, now constituted one of the meaningful claims of the May I demonstrations. In both cases the «winners» proved to be those who tied together the demand of immediate reforms with the objectives of the more distant future. Although the Eight Hours' League did not in itself become a great mass force, its role was positive in several respects and contributed to the pre-history of the May I demonstrations.

Still focusing on the pre-history, there is another moment, an international one, which seems not to have received adequate attention. It is a well-known fact that the 1880s were accompanied by the international worker-socialist congresses. A role in their celebration was played by the old pioneers who denied the death of the old International, by their considering it necessary to establish international cooperation to improve the actual situation of the workers. The need to promote workers' legislation had been raised at the congress of Ghent in 1877, and then again at the one of Chur in 1881.

The deepening of the economic crisis between 1884 and 1887 obviously had an impact on this process, on the choice of the topics, and also on the success of the conferences. It is a fact that at the 1883 and 1886 Paris conferences these questions, including the eight hours, came to the foreground repeatedly. The behaviour of the British representatives at the international congress, and then the debate that took place at the congress organized by the British Trade Unions in

1886 in Hull, were both characteristic and problematic in this perspective, and both meant a step forward, after all. Of course, the influence of the events that occurred in America in May 1886 was also felt at the second Paris conference, and thus the different influences strengthened each other.

The process continued and its next step was the Trade Union congress of London in 1888, which again was not a «purely British» event and was the antecedent of the 1889 Paris conference, which, as is known, fixed the proposal of the May I celebrations.

Some conclusions may be reached about this period. To the extent that workers' political and professional organizations strengthened, they were antagonized by the anarchists, also in relation to the legislation about labor safety. The fact that the anarchists and the various socialist-worker groups were still cooperating in the defense from violence against the workers did not reduce the antagonism. Their separation manifested itself in the course of the May I demonstrations.

Another problem was posed by the question of whether the claims to the 8-hour working day could be «narrowed» or not. In many places, not only in backward Eastern and Southern Europe, but even in France and Britain, where the reform of the 10-hour working day of 1847 had been appreciated by Marx, a generation later and years after the death of Marx, the practical implementation of the 10-hour day was still questionable. In vain, then, had the 1866 Congress of the First International stood up for the 8-hour day. In fact, in the 1880s — and even in 1890, as it appeared — many workers' organizations would have accepted the reduction of the working hours to 9, or even 10.

It was after such antecedents that the matter of May I came to be discussed at the Congress of the 2nd International. Naturally, we are not going to discuss the congress itself and its resolutions here. We shall pass over the antecedents, preparation, connections and echo of the first May I.

One of the important factors in connection with the first May I was the reaction of the bourgeois world to its challenge. Let us start from this point.

It is well known that the prevailing premonition was fear [2], or else an absolute underestimation. For the first May I was undoubtedley a new phenomenon, without precedents. But this dichotomy, fear and underestimation, did not always manifest itself so clearly and exclusive-

ly. It was supplemented by several other overtones, methods, manoeuvres. Thus, in the industrially developed countries, the news was spread that there would be no demonstrations in the other countries, implying that the success of an isolated strike would only do harm to the strikers. But several other counter-arguments were also put forward. Telling examples are those of Great Britain and France, the two model countries of the capitalist world at the time.

In Great Britain, Cunningham Graham, a member of Parliament who became some sort of a socialist, had submitted interpellations to Parliament about the introduction of the 8-hours at least in the mines, as early as 1889 and then again in the first months of 1890. He never received a clear answer. The importance of the matter was recognized and then it was adjourned *sine die*. The same thing happened when he requested a reply to the question: under what authorization was the British government delegation travelling to the international labour conference held in Berlin? Then, in February 1890, à propos the strike of the textile workers in Bombay, he pointed out that there was no limit to the working hours in India and asked whether the British government considered it necessary to exercise some pressure in order that something be done about the matter. The answer he got, the same as before, was concisely summed up by W.M. Smith, the First Lord of Treasury: «I fully recognize the importance of the subject, and I am anxious that it should be fully discussed» — then came another *sine die* adjournment. In Hungary, we characterize such an approach in this way: it is impossible to drive a nail into cotton. That soft resistence was, naturally, a factor in making things difficult and causing a great deal of delay.

But other methods were also employed. Characteristically enough, it also happened in Britain that representatives of the Liberal Party, partly its members who had earlier exerted an influence on the workers like Bradlaugh, put forward the argument (partly because they were justly afraid that the workers would get out of the influence of the Liberal Party) that it was no use struggling for the 8-hours because it would only increase the costs of production, which would lead to the increase of prices and reduce the competitiveness of the British products, and, in its turn, would cause unemployment. Thus the arguments came forth again which had always been heard whenever suggestions had been made to reduce the working hours.

The arguments of the French radicals, also exerting a significant mass influence in the other model country, were quite characteristic.

In the *Dépêche* of Toulouse, for example, where Jaurès (not yet a socialist) wrote the workers' column, the republicans were worried partly about the possibility of May I becoming an incentive to the upswing of the Boulanger movement. And it was Palletan himself who wrote an article expressing the same worries on the *Dépêche* of April 28. But the whole period was characterized in France by efforts in part to frighten the bourgeois public opinion and the workers with Boulanger, in part to mix up, obviously on purpose, the workers' movement and the Boulanger movement. In addition to the press, the Minister of the Interior Constans also made an experiment to that effect in Parliament.

Even more interesting, important and characteristic was the influence exerted by French radicals in the days of March-April when they kept harping on the fact that, if in other countries, under the reactionary monarchies (Germany, Austria, but also Italy, Spain and Belgium), May I might lead to bloody explosions, the same could not happen in France, where the power of the republic and the bourgeois parliamentary system were evident and the workers did not need to resort to such means. The papers of Paris, Toulouse, Castres and Bayonne wrote in this spirit, and a whole host of other examples could be cited.

This argument was intertwined with another that was revealed, among others, by the writer of the article published in the *Dépêche*, entitled «May I». He was ready to admit in principle that «it is certain that many kinds of economic and social reforms are to be introduced yet», but he continued by saying — and this coincided to a great extent with the tone of the British liberals —: «anyway, in our country the workers know that they cannot facilitate the solutions of social problems by demonstrations». To that it was added immediately; in order to solve them, it was necessary to win the favour of the radicals and of the liberals in the country. They were afraid that the workers would separate themselves from these parties, and that the latter would lose their mass base, or at least that this base would no longer be obedient to their policy.

It was not by accident that the argument that was to be used often by the rightists against the workers' movement was first applied in France. There they spoke directly to the «simple» workers over the heads of the leaders of the organized workers' movement and they stood up on behalf of these masses. Thus, in its «May I» article quoted above, printed before the «events», the otherwise open bourgeois

democratic *Dépêche*, on the one hand, wrote about those who «were instigating to dangerous stupidities», and, on the other hand, gave the «trustworthy» information that the workers «wanted to stay at home», adding that «they wanted to keep away from tumultuous actions and wished nothing else but to hand over their demands peacefully». And the end of this line of thought could be nothing else but the praise of these «simple workers» because they «gave a proof of their intelligence and patriotism». The writer of the article published in *L'Avant Garde* of Castres went even further, when he called upon these «sober workers» to shake off the yoke of their leaders who «were very far from them!» [3].

If that was the way the publicists with «a fine pen» wrote, then it is understandable that the French police resorted to preliminary arrests and that «administrative measures» were taken to an even greater extent in the countries of Eastern and Mid-Europe, in Italy and Spain, and also in Belgium, where there were great worries about the activities of the anarchists.

But in order not to be trapped in oversimplification, it must be pointed out that there were people on the left wing of the bourgeois radicals and liberals who supported both the 8-hours and the workers' holiday. The example of Cunningham Graham has already been given. Another case was that of Paul Janson, who played an important role in the political-social history of Belgium and who delivered on May I, 1891, his famous speech in the Belgian Pariament, which began as follows: «Gentlemen, today there is a holiday all over the world! So far every saint had his holiday according to the calendar. It is strange that only one holiday was missing, that of the working people» . Like Cunningham Graham, Janson in Bruxelles gave his complete solidarity to the workers, both rationally and sentimentally, but only a handful of MPs and not too many bourgeois democratic publicists or intellectuals did the same, being very few the «thinkers and writers» who identified themselves with the cause of the «fourth estate».

To return to the history of the first May I of 1890, it must be clearly seen that it caused a great many headaches and problems on this side of the barricades too, and not only as a consequence of the obstacles and the disturbances created on the other side.

The commentary written by Engels, in his usual sarcastic, concise and hardly enthusiastic manner, to Lafargue on August 29, 1889, following the Paris Congress, is well known. In connection with the

resolution about May I, he remarked: «This is the best thing the Congress created» — but it was far from the implementation of the plan.

First of all, facing the idea of universality, there were the specific political conditions in each country, contrasting realities and desires, and limiting the unity of workers. Moreover, then also appeared the problems of defeatism, of pusillanimity present in the workers' movement itself, and, at its opposite pole, of voluntarism and of anarchism. And if, on the one hand, there was a need for wide cooperation, then differences also appeared almost automatically, and those who were unable to perceive this need for unity and rejected the possible allies with their doctrinarian impatience gained ground.

The gravest internal obstacle was, perhaps, defeatism. Joffrin, known as a highly respected leader of the French workers, judged the action of May I hopeless. And not far from him was the wide camp of the French Possibilists, who wished to narrow down the action of May I to the handing over of petitions. This was done by the circle and paper of Jean Allemane and by the leftist Possibilists. Such extreme cases were not limited to France. The leaders of the British Trade Union movement were also uncertain for quite a while. And let us not forget that, in connection with the first May I, the question was raised whether it should be a general strike or only a commemoration at the end of the working day, and whether the holiday should be on May I, or «May I» be held on the first Sunday of May. It is known that the French Marxists stood up most resolutely for May I and the British Trade Unionists advocated the first Sunday in May. However, there were many positions between the two standpoints, including those who were for May I but admitted that they must adhere to other possibilities, or those who organized the celebration of May I separately, in a narrow circle. And then there was the problem of what May I should be like — a general strike or only a mass rally and a mass demonstration after the working day, or not even that, but just meetings of commemoration behind closed doors.

It appeared very soon that the answers to these essential questions did not depend simply on the political approach adopted.

An example is that of the Dutch Socialdemokratische Bond. It had originally advocated a general strike, but after it made several preliminary surveys about its feasibility, it finally withdrew to a quieter celebration. As it is known, in Germany this question led to a minor party crisis, since the «young» accused of opportunism the party leadership, headed by Bebel and Liebknecht. This debate is too well-

known to need a discussion in the present occasion, but it is clear that, on the one hand, it emerged not only within the German borders and, on the other, that the debate was not just «speculative», but was brought about by the real difficulties of material problems. And it was on this ground that the representatives of political realism clashed with those of voluntarism [4]. Thus, it was only years later that Germany became, next to Vienna, the scene of the most pompous May I celebrations.

With regard to the history of the first May I, it is clear that the German decision had an immediate impact on the international workers' movement. The French defeatists, like Joffrin and Allemane, as well as Hyndman and the social democratic *Justice* in Britain, referred to the German «quiet May I», when argueing that the masses could not be led to a strike on May I in Britain. Thus it was here that one of the most specific problems of May I emerged: the universality and simultaneity of the action, which had been emphasized in 1889 and which was so often referred to during the long period of preparation, was made problematic by political practice time after time in spite of all the preliminary preparations. This was so to such an extent that, as is known, Lafargue and Liebknecht had a sharp conflict about it and, as he had done so many times, Engels had to mediate again between the workers' parties and their leaders in the individual countries in order to restore confidence and assure the essentially simultaneous action. It is worth remembering that E. Vaillant too always did a lot to improve German-French connections and to iron out German-French animosities.

That intermezzo in Germany raises a new problem which also constitutes a vital part of the pre-history of the May I celebrations: the geographical mobility, the dynamism of the May I celebrations. It was already obvious during the preparations of the first May I, that the scenes of key importance were going to be Britain, and primarily London, and France, that is Paris, but with a somewhat smaller significance. The third important area, Germany, was suspected from the very beginning not to be the scene of the major events. However, the great surprise of May I, 1890, was Austria, and within it Vienna. It is known that Engels considered the demonstrations in London and Vienna to be of the greatest significance. He wrote that they set examples. But he emphasized the factor of surprise in relation to Austria: «who would have believed even three years ago that Vienna and Austria would set an example to everyone about how to commemorate

a proletarian holiday»[5]. (And let us not forget that in Vienna and Austria the May I demonstrations were held on May I in spite of the announcement of severe reprisals!).

The first May I demonstrations showed then that one of the elements of real success was that May I was not confined to Western Europe, but it also established firm bastions in Middle Europe from the beginning. (It may be remarked passingly that the different replies of Vienna and Berlin and comparison between them might constitute the subject of an interesting investigation). Another important indication of success was that in several places the demonstrations were really held on May I, thus proving in practice that international proletarian solidarity was a live matter and that a strike could also be organized on May I.

Let us remain within the geographical «area», but in the name of Hungarian «national pride», now. Budapest did not remain far behind Vienna. In that city, which was becoming an industrial centre but remained an exotic place to many Western Europeans, 60,000 people participated in the May I demonstrations, and the strike movement covered the whole country[6]. Even if the essential success was won by the industrial workers of the capital, many meetings took place at Szeged, Szombathely, Sopron, Györ, Pécs, Eger, Satoraljaujhely, that is in very different regions of the country, even in places where the industrial development was limited and the social composition was naturally not the same as in Budapest.

At the same time, it happened that from the rebellious region of Orosháza, the land working people sent representatives to the Budapest meeting. On the 4 of May 1890 the *Népszava* published a short article in which it was stressed: «The land workers of Orosháza sent György Vági and István Kun to the capital, to be represented in the great workers meeting and to directly express their sympathy... Our two Orosháza comrades left with the intention to found their society at home, and if possible to organize a national union for the sake of defending the interests of the agricultural labourers».

This happened in May 1 1890. On the second May I the meetings were banned by an order of the Minister of Internal Affairs. In spite of this order, even if in a smaller number than the year before, in 1891, 14-15,000 workers united in a great demonstration in Budapest.

In this demonstration a lot of workers from different trades and industries were present together. There were both the well known artisans of the early industrial development; the joiners, the shoemakers,

the tailors, the jewellers, and the new ones: the iron founders, the engineers. On this May I, 1891, in Budapest, major incidents took place in the great new iron-mechanical factories, where the owners deliberately and violenty tried to prevent or hamper the cessation of the work.

The other center of incidents, or even fights, had been right in the mentioned region of Orosháza, where the land labourers of the Békés county prepared to organise their own meeting (It is not quite clear in which proportion the socialist oriented unions were joined by totally landless agricultural workers and by peasants, owners of very small amounts of land insufficient for their living, who were compelled to undertake other work as well). Since these meetings were forbidden, they only abstained from work and the members of the union gathered at the union local. A flag was hoisted in the house, which became the center of the later fights. On the white flag it was written in red letters «Liberty, equality, fraternity» on one side, and on the other side «eight hours work, eight hours entertainment, eight hours rest». According to the article of the *Népszava*: «Our friends thought that if they hoisted the flag in the garden of the house, that would not be considered a public demonstration».

But the police officials came to quite different conclusions. They sent their agents to capture the flag without any preliminary warning, and at the same time they arrested the President, the Treasurer, and the Secretary of the Union and shut the Union local. After that happened, the labourers went in great masses to City Hall and demanded at once the liberation of the arrested and the restitution of the flag. Negotiations were started and the «préfet» of the region asked for postponement. The people remained assembled in the street before the office of the préfet, who by this time had asked for reinforcement from the army, which arrived in late afternoon. As soon as the soldiers appeared, the préfet at once cancelled his former promises to free the men and the flag. The soldiers laughed at the deceived mass of about 5,000 men, and that provoked the people into throwing stones at the windows of the building. In reply, the soldiers shot at the mass, and the policemen attacked with their swords. According to the regional paper, more than 150-200 wounded men remained on the ground and a few were killed in the massacre.

Similar events happened in another town, Békéscsaba, and in other villages in the same region. On the aftermath of the Orosháza events, on May 2, it happened in the neighbourhood (see *Népszava*, 8 May

1891) that the land labourers beat a landowner who told them: «You want higher wages, it will be good enough for you...». This tells to what extent this movement had spread to the agrarian regions as well — a fact that was remarked even by *The Times*.

After the Orosháza events a mass trial took place against the participants. There were 34 accused, and among them 11 were women. Of the 34, only 17 were acquitted. The social composition was revealing: 29 landless agricultural labourers and three artisans. In the other trial that started after the «revolt», that is when on May 2 the landless poorpeople had beaten some landowners and representatives of the lower state machine at Békéscsaba, the picture was the same. The three chief accused were landless agricultural labourers, all illiterates, and between 30 and 35 years old[7].

A further task could be to investigate the reasons why in certain regions this movement was stronger and in others weaker, and the demands of the landworkers. We are confronted by the fact that the demands put forth were very different among themselves. On the other hand, land labourers deliberately followed in many cases their comrades and examples from the cities. In conclusion, there was fraternity and affinity, but also peculiarities, due to the fact that this movement was joined in the countryside by both landless workers and very poor peasants.

Still referring to the geography of the international movement, the widespread demonstrations were as characteristic of Austria as they were of France, Switzerland or Spain, where the commemorating meetings and demonstrations occured simultaneously in all the different large cities. And that was no small result in countries like Switzerland or Spain. But to return to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy — and it must be pointed out that Engels wrote emphatically about Austria, not only about Vienna — the strike movement covered all Austria, reaching not only Hungary but also the Moravian Brno and the Czech Prague and Kladno, too. It was not by accident that the first May I was written about as a series of demonstrations that spread from Kristiania to Cadiz and from London to Budapest. That is the measure of the success of May I.

Mention must be made now of the unity of workers. In Britain, May I could never have become a real success without the inclusion of the Trade Unions. But it is also true that the Trade Unions gave way to the «extreme left», the socialists, without whom that success could not have been achieved either. It may be added that the Lon-

don «orchestra» included several different «instruments», for among the socialists were the Fabians and the Social Democrats, who criticized each other and the Trade Union leaders in a doctrinaire, impatient and sectarian manner. Yet, in spite of that, not only co-operation came to life, but the action was also supported by the Christian Socialists and the anarchists, as well as, naturally, by the declining organization of the Socialist League. In a similar manner, in France, the May I action was organized with a wide scope too, including not only Guesde and Lafargue's party, but also the Blanquists, under the leadership of Vaillant, as well as certain leftist Possibilists, supported by Benoît Malon. Here cooperation went so far that on the eve of May I, Malon and Vaillant were also given a chance to speak from the columns of the Guesdist *Le Cri du Travailleur*. Indeed, it was an essential character of May I, the fact that it had to attract all the elements of social progress or of socialism. Thus it could happen that Cipriani was allowed to speak from the columns of the *Cri*: true, his words did not lose their anarchist character, which partly disturbed the cause of May I, but at the same time they enriched it as well. In a similar manner, the movement was supported by *Le Révolté* and by the London anarchist *Freedom*, in their own ways and means.

Several qualifications must be made with regard to the joining of anarchists. On the one hand, it turned out that the influence of the anarchists on May I, 1890, had been overestimated by many people. On the other hand, it is conspicuous that so many similarities can be found in the anarchist *Freedom*, in the *Commonwealth*, the weekly of the Socialist League that was getting increasingly under the influence of the anarchists, and in the *Justice*, the weekly of the Social Democratic Federation. The common element is the following: it was a great action but it would be a great illusion to take workers' legislation and even the 8-hour law seriously, therefore the forces must be concentrated on the socialist revolution since the time for it has actually come. Such ideas can be also found in the German «young generation» and not only among French and Spanish anarchists; and similar feelings appeared in several articles of Guesde and Lafargue. A century later, it would, of course, be all too easy to point out that they expected the socialist revolution overnight and that they were wrong. It is obvious that their voluntarism and the overmphasizing of their own influence, as with Hyndman, repelled a great many people (much was written on this aspect at the time), but it is also true

that these beliefs and hopes exercised a significant influence on the first May I.

There is one more aspect of the first May I which must not be neglected: guests coming from abroad and guest speakers also spoke from the platforms in the various coutries. That deepened the internationalism of May I. In this connection it must also be remembered that the special issue of several papers, which were put out in the spirit of internationalism, carried the articles written by socialist leaders of other coutries. It is not possible to analyse them here. It can be said, though, that they represent a rich heritage for us, even if their colours may be faded.

Finally, a few words about an even deeper result of the first May I, to prove in another way that May I had a great and widespread influence. Let us refer to just a few episodes. The President of the French Parliament Floquet, in spite of the contrary intentions of the police, received the delegation of the workers on May I, which consisted of people belonging to a diversity of organizations who had different backgrounds, thus representing the unity of workers. Then, following the reception, he assured the delegation that their claim had «deeply moved him» and that he would call the attention of the Parliament to them; and that was something more than diplomacy or a cheap political manoeuvre. Still, at the same time, Palletan, the uncrowned king of the French publicists of the time, qualified the French Government as the most retrograde government in Europe. In opposition to the critics, there were several statements of the radical press — acting as if nothing had happened — which greeted the French workers for their «patriotism and soberness». Others, like the French Possibilists, were seemingly surprised by the success of the international action. On the whole, however, the hardest sentence to be read in the «non-workers' press» was written by Charles Gide, who pointed out: «The slogan everywhere was quiet and discipline. There was every reason to worry in Vienna, Austria; still the workers testified to excellent discipline and a high degree of organization. The bourgeoisie and primarily our bourgeoisie may draw the conclusion from this morality: Socialism can no longer be a factor to be neglected (*quantité négligeable*)... We, the bourgeoisie, must recognize that the greatest revolution of the 20th century is taking place without us and against us... if we continue to be deaf to the calls of justice» [8].

1 Hector Denis, *La dépression économique et sociale et l'histoire des prix*, Bruxelles, 1895.

2 It was on the basis of the German experiences that Paul Singer wrote to Engels on May 13, 1890: « May I has frightened the German bourgeoisie. You may imagine the fright of the society when all kinds of episodes can be heard » (IML CPA Moscow, fond I, op. 5, e. hr. 6078).

3 In this connection special mention must be made of the standpoint of Charles Gide, the theoretician of the French cooperative movement. On this occasion Gide turned both to the bougeoisie with a severe warning, pressing it for social reforms, and to the workers, whom he warned with the same acuteness that they could only count on gradual reforms. Characteristically enough, he recommended the « British way » to the workers and, as an attainable realism, the 10-hour day. See: Charles Gide, « Les trois 8 », *L'Emancipation*, May 15. 1890.

4 I think it would be wrong to oversimplify the problem. Besides the well-known « young generation », Adolf Braun also informed Victor Adler in his letter of April 4, 1890, « that the masses would be ready » to celebrate May I on May I and also wrote about the faults of the parliamentary fraction and the « mistakes » of « August (Bebel) and Paul (Singer) ». See: *Victor Adler Archiv*, Vienna.

5 Marx-Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 22, pp. 61-65.

6 Of this « exotic Hungarian » phenomenon the public opinion abroad could be informed with great difficulties, because of the language problem. In April, the Minister of the Interior issued a circular in which he permitted meetings under the supervision of the police but did not permit demonstrations. Reality, however, overcame the prohibition, for the procession of the masses was transformed into a demonstration. And even though at some places the flags were confiscated under the order of the chief of police of Budapest and the workers' bands were prohibited to play, in the end it was the demonstration and not the repression to succeed. This is what the daily paper of the Socialist Democratic Party, *Népszava* (People's Word), wrote about the action: « The meeting of the workers came off excellently and now everyone who was witness to the events is under the impression of surprise and is paralysed ». To all that it may be added, again as a Hungarian specificity, that between 1891 and 1893 in Hungary the agricultural proletariat was successfully included in the movement of the May I demonstrations and that there were also several harvest-strikes. And it is almost self-evident that in these districts oppression and then reprisals were more bloody than in the industrial centres.

7 Selected documents from these processes in: *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* (Selected Documents of the History of the Hungarian Labour Movement), Budapest, 1954, vol. 2, pp.90-97.

8 Charles Gide, « Les trois 8 », *L'Emancipation*, May 15, 1890.